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Old ✦ Portage ✦ Road,

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THE OLD PORTAGE ROAD.

AN EARLY ATTEMPT BY THE FRENCH TO ESTABLISH MILITARY POSTS IN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY, AND A MILITARY PORTAGE ROAD FROM LAKE ERIE TO LAKE CHAUTAUQUA.

[BY H. C. TAYLOR, M. D., BROCTON, N. Y.]

As to the location and opening of a Portage road from Lake Erie at or near Barcelona to Lake Chautauqua at or near Mayville, previous to the settlement of the county by the whites, there seems to be little doubt. Its course was plainly to be traced, and the fact generally conceded. Even at this day there are traces of its existence, less strongly marked, 'tis true, for as in all things earthly, this work of an earlier era, under the etceteras of civilization and the ever effacing hand of time, is fast losing its distinctive features.

Its starting point was on the west side of Chautauqua creek at Barcelona, within a few rods of the lake. Its course from this point was southerly along the bank of the creek, passing the afterward location of the first grist mill built in the county, by John McMahan, not far from the mouth of the creek, in 1804 or 1805, reached and crossed the now main road at the ancient cross roads, one mile west of the centre of the village of Westfield, at the monument erected there a few years since by Hon. E. T. Foote. (1870.) From this point by a south easterly course it soon reached the steep bank of the creek Chautauqua, along which it ran for a mile when it passed into a deep gorge of a hundred feet or more in depth,

through which the creek ran, by an extensive dugway still plainly to be seen on the lands owned by Miss Elizabeth Stone, where it crossed the creek and by another dugway on lands for many years owned by Wm. Cummings, it reached the high banks a few rods from the present Glen Mills. The passage of this gorge was a work of considerable magnitude. The west bank was so very precipitous that the passage of teams would seem nearly impossible, yet it is said that in later years, before the road on the east side of the creek through the now village of Westfield was opened, vast quantities of salt and merchandise were transported over it from Lake Erie to Lake Chautauqua for Pittsburgh and other points in the Ohio Valley.

On the east side of the gorge the road was less precipitous and is now a public highway. After reaching a point above Glen Mills on the south side of the gorge through which the east branch of the Chautauqua creek now runs, and where the Mayville road is now located at that point, to avoid the rugged section over the hill it passed up the east branch for some distance and continued to the east of the present thoroughfare to Mayville, and reached Chautauqua lake at or near the present steamboat landing. My own

knowledge of the existence of this old road was acquired in the winter of 1827-28. In the spring of 1827 my father removed with his family from New England to Fredonia in this county. I was then a lad of thirteen. We had almost for our next door neighbor Col. James McMahan, the first actual settler in Chautauqua county. He kept a tavern on the west hill, and the bar room was often the resort of an evening of neighbors and friends with a slight sprinkling of young America, and at that day I had the honor of being known among the latter. Mr. McMahan was a fine type of the pioneer settler and a genial gentleman. It needed but a hint to set him off into a recital of scenes and incidents of early life in Chautauqua, while yet a part of Genesee. I remember well how he would sit for an hour, possibly with his head inclined, his broad and massive chin resting nearly upon his breast, gazing intently into the fire, stoves had not yet been introduced, and as if entirely unconscious of the presence of others and in his own peculiar style, relate facts and associations of his life of hardship and toil of 24 years on his farm near Westfield, and for some years earlier as a surveyor in this and adjoining counties, but mostly in western counties of Pennsylvania. [Mr McMahan passed through this county as a surveyor as early as 1795.] He seemed happy in living over again all that had entered into his life during those years. He often spoke of the old road, giving an accurate description of it the entire length, and stated that it was in use, more or less, when he came to this county as a settler in 1802, for the transportation of salt and merchandise from Portland harbor to Mayville for the Alleghany and Ohio valleys, and continued to be in use until 1805, when the route was changed to the east

side of the creek. (The Portage Road as now known through Westfield was surveyed by James McMahan in August 1805, and legally located the same month by road commissioners Thomas McClintock and James Dunn.) To all these recitals I was more than a willing listener. The impressions I received are as vivid today as they were the next hour, and they have remained with me as some pleasant memory. The road was then, 1827, plainly to be seen at intervals and could be traced nearly its entire length, especially the northern portion from the lake to the foot hills

In his location of the road Mr. McMahan incidentally mentioned the fact that the first cemetery in the county for the burial of the whites was placed on this road, north of the ancient cross roads, on the west side, between the present main road and the L. S. & M. S. R. R. tracks. In after years after my venerable friend had returned to Westfield I made a critical survey of the road myself, with an interest that it would be difficult for me to describe; and in the month of June of the present year I again looked the ground over and noted the changes time had wrought.

There being no doubt as to the existence of the road in question, it will be the object of this paper to make answer to the following, viz: Who were the projectors of the road? Who its builders? When built? and for what purpose? The popular theory that the French during their efforts for supremacy on this continent, at some time and for some specific purpose, had constructed this highway through the forest, however true, lacked authentic evidence. Positive data seemed to be lacking, but certain facts exist and they are abundant, which in a very large degree warrant inferences that reasonably and properly take their

places in our mind as facts. I shall improve upon such evidences as I have been able to collect, and present such facts and associations as seem pertinent and such as have found a place in my note book through the years of the past. From my boyhood up, I have noticed that in discussions touching this question, the impression has always obtained, that whatever the object of construction it was one looking to some great achievement, some great scheme contemplated or in process of fulfillment, or both, and that in connection with it something doubtless did occur of vast importance, and that possibly had a bearing in shaping the destiny of the race on this continent. In this effort I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Hon. E. T. Foote for valuable information first brought to my notice, in connection with the road in question, by him, and published by the *Fredonia CENSOR* in Feb., 1871. [Affidavit Stephen Coffen, Col. Records State of New York, vol. 6, page 834.] Aside from this letter whatever I present will be gleanings from various sources.

In order to a proper understanding of the question as I discuss the propositions named, it will be necessary to step backward as to time and for a few moments trace the claims of the English and French, respectively, to territory in the new world. You will all remember the historic fact that James the First, of England, claimed, by right of discovery, a large proportion of the North American continent. Under this assumption, or presumption, as you please, for the purpose of planting and extending settlements in the western world, he granted to the London and the Plymouth companies in England by letters patent, in 1606, certain rights and privileges to all that portion of the continent extending from the 34th to the 45th deg. of north latitude inclusive, or a

strip of territory 660 miles wide, and extending from the mouth of Cape Fear river in North Carolina to Halifax in Nova Scotia, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans, including little less than two millions, six hundred and fifty-six thousand five hundred square miles. This was a vast territory, and it is not probable that King James, or the members of these companies, or any one of them, had even a remote idea of its extent. Of course our own county and State were included in this grant. Under these and some subsequent grants of less magnitude, settlements were made in Virginia in 1607, in Massachusetts in 1620, in Connecticut in 1630, in New Hampshire in 1622, in Rhode Island in 1636. New York was settled by the Dutch in 1614, and ceded to the English in 1664; and from these and other special permits, or grants, other settlements were formed, until the entire seaboard from Maine to Florida was occupied.

The large centers of population were upon the seaboard, but smaller settlements were pushed westward with vigor until the flood of emigration began pouring over the crest of the Alleghanies, and adventurous traders were located at every convenient post on the tributaries of the Upper Ohio, and it was the design to open up the vast territories beyond the mountains and secure the profits of a trade with the natives. Beside this and an overweening ambition for territory and for building up a vast dependency of the English crown, as time passed on, from the turn of affairs it was more than possible that their old enemy on the northern border would attempt an occupancy of territories claimed by them—the English—west of the mountains, and strong efforts were made to make good their own presumptive title.

France, from the first discoveries in America, had not been an idle

spectator. She, too, was ambitious of Empire. In 1603 the King of France granted to De Monts, a distinguished Frenchman and a gentleman of large means, the sovereignty of the entire country from the 40th to the 46th deg. of north latitude, or from one deg. south of New York city to one deg. north of Montreal. He sailed from France with two small vessels in the spring of 1604, and in May made a landing in Nova Scotia. After trafficking with the natives through the season he spent the winter on a small island off the mouth of the River St. Croix, on the coast of New Brunswick, in a small fort hastily constructed by him. In the spring of 1605 De Monts removed to a point on the Bay of Fundy on the west coast of Nova Scotia, and planted the first permanent settlement of the French in America, calling it Port Royal, now called Annapolis—thus antedating the settlement of Virginia by the English two years—and giving the general name of Acadia to that peninsula, New Brunswick, and the adjacent islands. De Monts returned to France and three years after, or in 1608, by permission fitted out a second expedition for the traffic in furs with the natives on the River St. Lawrence, and delegated the command to Samuel Champlain, who had before visited that section.

In June of that year Champlain, after visiting various sections, landed at a point five miles above the Isle of Orleans, where he founded a settlement which eventually became the city of Quebec. This was the first permanent settlement in New France or Canada. After the founding of Quebec, settlements were planted in various sections of Acadia and Canada in rapid succession. From the first permanent settlements of the English in Virginia and the French in Acadia and New France these two nations were parallel pow-

ers in the American continent. The French, however, were singularly unfortunate in many of their movements, but with a perseverance worthy of commendation they continued to extend their limits and planted settlements over a vast extent of territory. A trading post was planted at Mackinaw in 1667, at Detroit in 1670, at Niagara in 1679, and others were planted far into the western wilds, at Vincennes, Indiana, and at Kaskaskia in Illinois. They had also flourishing settlements in the northern border of the Gulf of Mexico. The English claimed territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, under letters patent, as we have seen, but the French, not recognizing, of course, any grant by the English sovereigns, claimed territory by rights of exploration and possession, and planted their standard where it pleased them best. Please bear in mind the location of the settlements of these two powers on the continent, say in 1744, at the opening of King George's war, for they remained relatively nearly the same, the English along the Atlantic seaboard mostly, but pushing westward and over to the Alleghanies, and to the great lakes; the French along the gulf and river St. Lawrence, and in a decided sense pushed westward to the great lakes and along the streams that fall into the gulf of Mexico, with a few flourishing settlements along the gulf.

With us even at this distance of time it is not difficult to imagine the spirit of jealousy and rivalry that existed between these two nations in regard to their western possessions. It is said that the statesman of each very well knew at this time and for many years earlier had known, that the time was approaching when this jealousy would culminate in a fierce struggle that would decide the supremacy over these western possessions.

As early as 1675 that farsighted and intrepid French explorer, La Salle, suggested to the French government not only the desirability but the vast importance of a union of Canada with the valley of the Mississippi by a line of military posts or forts, as a security against the English and their advancing settlements along the seaboard and the eastern slope of the Alleghanies, and the government for a long series of years designed carrying this suggestion into effect, but from exigencies occurring at home in the shape of jealousies and wars with their old rival, it was put over from time to time and it was not until 1722 that they came to feel the absolute necessity of a movement toward its accomplishment. In this movement it was the design on the part of the French to isolate the English settlements and confine them east of the Alleghany mountains—cut them off from the vast territories on the west of the mountains, and from the lucrative trade with the natives inhabiting those sections. Of course the English would not consent to be thus hemmed in and confined to a narrow strip of territory comparatively along the seaboard, with their large ideas and pride of Empire. In 1722, as I intimated, commenced a great military strife, yet without actual declaration of war for some years, that was only to cease with the destruction of the French power on the continent in 1759. [The treaty of peace was not signed until 1763.] A desultory warfare was kept up on the part of the colonies, and on the part of the English colonies by the advice of the home government, and with the exception of King George's war of about four years, from 1744 to 1748, was intermittently pursued until the French and Indian war, commonly so called, which was declared on the part of the English May 17, 1756, and on

the part of the French on June 9, following. Fort Niagara was built by the French as early as 1678, but was taken and destroyed by the Indians in 1684, and for a series of years remained in ruins and might have remained thus for many years longer had not the English in 1722 established a trading post at Oswego on Lake Ontario. [The Fort was not built until 1727.] This doubtless was the reason of Fort Niagara being very soon thereafter reconstructed and reoccupied, or in 1725. This seemed also a favorable moment in the matter of carrying out their design of uniting their Canadian possessions with the Ohio Valley and their settlements below, by way of Niagara, Lake Erie, and some carrying place between that lake and the streams running south from the great watershed along the southern shore of Lake Erie. The English occupancy and permanent settlements were advancing and the movement could no longer be delayed with safety to them. The English must be kept east of the Alleghanies, or their possessions would be worthless comparatively, and they addressed themselves to the task with a good deal of sagacity and vigor. Yet there was another long delay, from causes that I will not now stop to discuss, and it was not until 1752 that the first expedition to operate west of Niagara was fitted out. The Marquis Duquesne had been appointed governor of Canada and arrived that year, 1752, and at once commenced his rule by a grand military review. He was pompous in his bearing and in a very marked degree failed of securing the respect of the people, only such respect was accorded him as he compelled by harsh measures. The enterprise upon which he was about to enter was very unpopular with the soldiers and the people and loud cries of discontent were heard on every hand and songs of a ribald

character, in which the names of the Governor and his advisers were ingeniously made a part, were boisterously sung on the streets of Quebec, and the malcontents were only quieted and made to obey the orders of their superiors by an arrest and incarceration of some of the leaders. Gov. DuQuesne had undertaken a vast enterprise, but he did not seem to realize its immensity and the dangers from various sources that would surround it, especially from the evil designs of the ambitious and unprincipled adventurers of his own military household. He was warned by the Colonial Minister, M. Rouille, with reference to the establishment of military posts in Ohio, "that no private or unworthy motives on the part of others be allowed to influence him," but this seemed the one favorable opportunity of a long series of years and he could not well resist the temptation to attempt carrying out the scheme so long had in contemplation, though his vanguard consisted of but 250 men, whereas his original plan called for 700 men; and it is quite possible that he did not scrutinize as closely as he ought the motives and conduct of some of his officers; if he had some serious disasters might possibly have been avoided, for it is true "that every military movement, and above all the establishment of every new post, was an opportunity to official thieves with whom the colony swarmed."

Beside the personal ambition of Gov. DuQuesne there was another motive that seemed to call for immediate action. The English settlements were advancing rapidly as we have seen, but a strange neglect on the part of the provisional assemblies had actually left them without protection, and the entire western slope of the Alleghenies and the valley of the Ohio would be an easy acquisition. The Governor was proud to believe that he was the chosen vessel to direct and carry out this vast

enterprise and secure for his King and country millions of square miles of territory and untold wealth, and that his own brow, for his faithfulness and zeal, would be crowned with the chaplet of fame.

During the fall and early winter the preparations for the expedition to La Belle Riviere were proceeded with, with as much expedition as the limited resources of the colony would allow, and on the first of January, 1753, the first division was ready to move.

Just here, in order to an understanding of the discussion of the question in hand, I must be allowed to introduce an abstract of an affidavit made by Stephen Coffen, a member of this expedition, before Sir William Johnson, a member of the New York Council, in 1754, and but a few years since, 1871, brought to notice by Hon. E. T. Foote, while searching ancient documents relating to the colonial history of New York, to which I once referred. It furnishes the only clue we have as a starting point as to the old road in question, and as the route of the expedition as originally designed, lay through a portion of our county, I will be pardoned I know if I present an abstract of considerable extent, as I am able to do, the affidavit lying before me.

Who was Stephen Coffen? April 11, 1713, a treaty of peace was concluded at Utrecht in Holland, between England and France, whereby England obtained control of the fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the whole of Nova Scotia was ceded to the British Crown.

The government by the English of the territory acquired was little else, however, than a military occupation, and that confined to the southern portion of the peninsula. Nine tenths and more of the inhabitants were French, sympathized with and rendered aid to them whenever occasion occurred. Annoyances to the

English for a series of years were continuous, and misfortunes from this source were of frequent occurrence. The French were desirous of regaining this territory and entered upon this course of annoyance and a system of encroachments, to still farther narrow down the English occupation, so that at some favorable moment they might wipe out the garrison at Port Royal and rid themselves of troublesome neighbors.

A letter from the Governor of Canada to the minister of War of the home government [Journal, Paris Doc. Vol. 10. P. 89.] speaks of the necessity of again acquiring the lost territory, of the loyalty of the people, that they were able and willing to furnish a large portion of the supplies necessary for the subsistence of the troops who might occupy the country, at least all the northern portion of it, as occasion seemed to them necessary. This the settlers did in opposition to all treaty stipulations. In all the wars between England and France, the colonies of both nations on this continent were as a matter of necessity involved, and various expeditions on the part of the English colonies were from time to time fitted out and did good service toward checking the aggressions of the French. The state of affairs being as we have seen, to counteract the mischief being done, the colonies under the direction of the home government, or at least at their suggestion, fitted out an expedition of 500 men, almost entirely from New England, in the fall of 1746, placed it under the command of Col. John Graham, a native of Massachusetts, [Col. Hist. Paris, doc. vol. 10, P. 90. Also Haliburton's Nova Scotia, vol. 1, P. 139.] and Lieut. Col. Arthur Noble of the famous Waldo regiment at the siege of Louisburgh in 1745. [Col. history. Paris, Doc. vol. 10, page 93.] The expedition was sent by water to Port Royal, (Annapolis),

and from there overland in the middle of a severe winter (Jan. 1747) to the town of Minas, situated at the head of Minas Basin, an arm of the bay of Fundy, and in the very heart of the peninsula. This town was located in the center of a vast territory inhabited by an industrious and thrifty population, intensely loyal to the French crown, and also under the control of a considerable force of the royal troops. A journal of occurrences in Canada by Sieur Cheron, characterizes this movement on the part of the English as the boldest movement of the war. The object of this expedition was to build block houses and form a permanent location, overawe the people and effectually seize upon all the military posts belonging to the French, intercept supplies, etc. Their movements were well known by the French, but the expedition reached its destination without molestation. Before a blockhouse could be built, however, or other place of security prepared, they were attacked by French troops under Capt. Coulon, Feb. 11, 1747. They took refuge in the few houses of the town, but were eventually overcome, 70 [The French claimed 130 killed.] were killed and the balance taken prisoners. Of the latter was Stephen Coffen. Mr. Coffen took refuge in a house with Lieut. Col. Noble, who was killed during the engagement, and four others, Lieutenants Lechemere, Jones and Pickering and Ensign Noble. [Haliburton's Nova Scotia, vol. 2, p. 132.] From here we will allow Mr. Coffen to tell his own story as contained in his deposition to which I have referred:

COFFEN'S AFFIDAVIT.

Stephen Coffen deposes and says that he was taken prisoner by the French and Indians of Canada at Menis, in the year 1747; [spelled *Minas*. It was a French village in Nova Scotia

and at one time a town of considerable importance. No traces of it are now to be seen, except the cellars of the houses, a few aged orchards and groups of willows.] that he was under the command of Maj. Noble (acting); that from Menis he was taken to various places by his captors, and after about four years he came to Quebec. That in September, 1752, while at Quebec as a prisoner, he tried to agree with some Indians to aid him in an escape to his own home in New England, but the Indians proved treacherous and informed the Governor of the plot, who immediately ordered him to jail where he lay three months, after which time he was released. That the French were then preparing for a march to Belle Riviere, (Ohio) and he offered his services, but the Governor, Gen. Le Cain (Duquesne), refused him. That he then applied to Maj. Ramsey for liberty to go to Ohio with the army, and that he was finally accepted and equipped as a soldier, and was at once sent with the detachment of 300 [The Governor reports to his government that there were but 250 men.] men to Montreal under the command of Mons. Babeer, and from there they set off immediately by land and ice for Lake Erie, stopping twice for rest, the last time at Toronto, before reaching Niagara. That they remained at the fort 15 days, and then set out by water, it being April, and arrived at Chadakoin, on Lake Erie (Barcelona), where they were ordered to fell timber and prepare it for building a fort, according to the Governor's instructions, but Mons. Morang [spelled *Marin*] coming up the next day with 500 men and 20 Indians, put a stop to the building of the fort, not liking the situation, the river Chadakoin (Chautauqua Creek) being too shallow to carry out any craft with provisions, etc., to Belle Riviere [the French called the Alleghany river La Belle Riviere, a continuation of the Ohio.]

That the two commanders had a sharp debate, the first insisting on building the fort there in accordance with instructions, but Morang gave him a writing to satisfy the Governor on that point; and then Mons. Mercier, who was commissary and engineer, was directed to go along the lake and look for a situation, which he found, and returned in three days, it being fifteen leagues to the southwest of Chadakoin (at Erie).

That they were then all ordered to repair thither, and when they arrived there were about 20 Indians fishing in the lake, who immediately quit it on seeing the French. They built a square fort of chestnut logs, squared and lapped over each other to the height of 15 feet. The fort was 120 feet square, and a log house in each square, a gate at the northward and one at the southward and not a porthole cut in any part of it. When finished they called it Fort La Briske [*Presque*] Isle. The Indians who came with them now returned, being dissatisfied with the dogged behavior of Morang. As soon as the fort was finished they moved southward, cutting a wagon road through a fine level country 21 miles to the river of Boeuf (at Waterford), leaving Capt. Deponteney with a hundred men to garrison Fort la Briske Isle. Then they fell to work cutting timber, boards etc. for another fort. Mons. Morang ordered Mons. Bite with 50 men to go to a place called by the Indians ganagarahara (Franklin), on the banks of Belle river where Aux Boeufs [the French called French Creek, Aux Boeufs (O Buff)], empties into it. Then Morang had 90 boats made to carry down the baggage and provisions to said place. Mons. Bite in coming to said Indian Place (Franklin) was asked what he wanted or intended, and he answered that it was their father's, the governor of Canada's

intention to build a trading house for their and all their brother's convenience, but the Indians replied that the land was theirs, that they would not have them build on it. The said Mons. Bite returning, met two English traders with their horses and goods, whom they bound and brought to Morang, who ordered them to Canada in irons. Bite reported to Morang that the situation was good, but the water of the river Aux Boeuf was too low at that time to carry down any craft with provisions, etc. That Morang became very peevish, sour and sick, and was very unpopular with his officers and men, and that he wished his officers and men would confine him in the fort and set fire to it so as to terminate some of his disappointments, as he had promised the governor of Canada to finish the three forts that season, and not being able to fulfill the same, was both afraid and ashamed to return to Canada, being sensible he had now forfeited the governor's favor, so he desired to perish in the flames of the burning fort. The officers would not do this, though they had not the best regard for him, as he had behaved very ill to them all.

That about eight days before he left Fort la Briske Isle, Chev. la Crake arrived express from Canada in a birch canoe worked by ten men, with orders (as he afterwards learned) from Governor la Cain (Duquesne) to Morang to make all the preparation possible against the spring of the year, to then build two forts at Chadakoin, one of them by Lake Erie (Barcelona), the other at the end of the carrying place at Lake Chadakoin (Chautauqua), which carrying place is fifteen miles from one lake to the other. That Chev. la Crake returned immediately to Canada, after which, when Fort Riviere O'Boeuf was finished, which was built of wood, stockaded triangularwise, with two log houses on the inside, Morang ordered all the party to return to

Canada for the winter season, except 300 men which he kept to garrison both forts and prepare material against the spring for building other forts. Morang sent also Jean Coeur, an officer and interpreter, to stay the winter among the Indians of Ohio in order to prevail upon them, if possible, not only to allow of the building of forts on their lands, but also persuade them to join the French interests against the English. Deponent further says that on the 28th of October he set out for Canada under command of Capt. Deman, who had the command of twenty-two *Battoes*, with twenty men in each *Batto*, the remainder, being 760 men, followed in a few days. On the 30th they arrived at Chadakoin (Barcelona), where they stayed four days, during which time Mons. Peon [spelled *Pean*], with 200 men, cut a wagon road over the carrying place from Lake Erie to Lake Chadakoin, viewed the situation which proved to their liking, so set off Nov. 3d for Niagara where we arrived on the 6th; it is a poor old rotten fort with 25 men in it. We left 50 men there to build *Battoes* for the army in the spring. Also built a storehouse for provisions, &c. Stayed there two days then set off for Canada by water. That while within one mile from Oswego, all hands being weary with rowing all night, they landed and had breakfast, and at this point he, with a Frenchman, slipped off and got to the fort and were there concealed until the army passed, when they left and came here (Col. Johnson's). Deponent further says that in all, during the season, there came to Presque Isle about 1,500 men—300 were kept for garrison duty at la Briske Isle and la Boeuf, 50 at Niagara and the balance returned to Canada.

his
STEPHEN [X] COFFEN.
mark

Sworn before me this 10th day of January, 1754.

WILLIAM JOHNSON.

Lieut. H. Holland, commanding at Oswego, in a letter to Gov. Delancey of New York, dated Nov. 8, 1753, speaks of these two deserters, the one an Englishman and the other a Frenchman, coming to the fort at the time stated [Col. Hist. N. Y. Vol. 6, page 825.] Six other deserters from Niagara (Frenchmen,) came to Oswego the fore part of April the following year (1754), two of whom, Antoine Francois L'Onaque and Jean Baptiste de Cortois, were with the expedition to Lake Erie, Chadakoin etc. [Col. Hist, N. Y. Vol. 6, page 833.] They were sent to Sir William Johnson, and by him to Albany where they were critically examined by Dr. Alex. Calhoun, and the facts elicited sent to Gov. Delancey, April 12, 1754. Their statements, and the diagrams of Fort la Briske Isle and la Boeuf they prepared were in nearly every particular corroborative of the statements made by Coffen in his affidavit. The English were well apprised in regard to this expedition, through deserters before it left Canada, and of the real designs of the French. The three divisions of their army passed the fort at Oswego in the precise order and on the time proposed by them, the first leaving Quebec January 1, 1753, the second leaving on the first of March, and the third on the first of May following, the last passing Oswego on the 14th of May, as we learn from a letter of Lieut. Holland commanding, to Gov. Clinton dated the next day, May 15th, and of Capt. Stoddart to Col. Johnson, of the same date. The plans of the French were in no sense disturbed until they reached Chadakoin, where after a fierce wordy contest between the two commanders, M. Barber and M. Marin, the route was changed from that point to the present location of Erie, as stated by Coffen and the deserters from Niagara in April following.

I regret exceedingly that the building of the fort at Chadakoin (Barcelona,) was so suddenly interrupted. A few months since I visited the proposed location, as I imagined, though nothing but the peculiar surface of the ground gave me the least idea as to its certain location. But while there I could not help conjuring up weird phantoms from the misty past and covering the whole section with an army of Frenchmen, well drawn out and reaching to the foothills and over the highlands to Chautauqua lake. Many years ago I had the pleasure of visiting the grounds occupied by Forts le Briske Isle and le Boeuf. We have become interested in these forts and I desire to speak of them more definitely, in fact this seems to be necessary in order to fully understand what is to follow. Fort la Briske Isle was located on the top of a hill, or high plat of ground on the west side of what is now called Mill Creek, the stream that empties into the bay at Erie, at its eastern end and just east of the now Parade street, one of the popular streets of the city. It was situated in the angle formed by the steep sides of the narrow valley of Mill Creek and the bluff of the lake or bay. It was a commanding position. Coffen in his affidavit gives us a slight description of it, its dimensions etc., and others speak of it as built in the approved French fashion, with four bastions, one of which was evidently used for storing arms. The site is being gradually destroyed in the process of brickmaking. Many relics have been found from time to time, such as old swords, pistols, cutlerly, broken crockery and occasionally a coin, and the remains of bodies that had been buried near by. A few years ago workmen unearthed what they termed a bay window of the old fort. It

was one of the bastions and had in it a large number of pistols, gun-barrels, hatchets and other tools. Many of these relics are now in museums, and many in the possession of citizens of Erie and other localities, notably in the collection of the late Frank Henry of Wesleyville in that county. [John Miller, Jr., of Erie.]

The fort was a work of considerable extent and was not completed and ready for occupancy until Aug. 7 of that year, 1753, over three months from the arrival of the French on the ground, not as early as we would infer from the affidavit of Coffen. It was held by the French until 1759, a period of six years, when the report of British successes in various directions, especially at Quebec, Sept. 13th decided them to evacuate the two forts between Lake Erie and the Alleghany river, Forts la Briske Isle and le Boeuf, and the Stockade at Venango, and retire from the country. They did not do this, however, but with the hope and expectation of returning within the next two or three years, not doubting but that the English within that time would be driven out of Canada. Four years later, in 1763, the English took possession of Fort la Briske Isle, and held it until it was stormed and taken by the Indians during the famous conspiracy of Pontiac, in May of the same year. It surrendered after the hardest two days fight on record. Upon the nearly level ground on the opposite side of the stream from the fort when held by the French, a village had grown up, and it is on record that at one time it contained one hundred families or about 500 inhabitants. It had a mill for grinding grain, and other village etceteras, and a Roman Catholic priest. This record was made in 1758. Late in 1759 there was not a vestige of it left. The cause of this is legendary. One story has it that

a plague of small pox wiped out the entire population; another is that the Indians tomahawked every man, woman and child; still another is to the effect that the people, frightened by the reports of a forward movement on the part of the English, and the unfriendly state of affairs between them and the Indians, hastily fled, burying in wells their money and valuables. The latter story is probably the true one, the people leaving with the garrison. Until within a few years, treasure hunters were busy digging over the ground occupied by the fort and the village, or up to the time the opening of the streets made city squares of it. Almost every square rod from Third street to the bay was at some time turned over. [John Miller, Jr., of Erie.]

Now let us take a short survey of Fort le Boeuf. Washington's journal of his visit to this fort while in the performance of duties assigned him by the governor of Virginia, as every student of history will recall, locates this fort on the south and west fork of French Creek near the water; that it was nearly surrounded by the creek and a small branch of it, forming a kind of island. Its location was just south of the village of Waterford in Erie county, Pa. [It was in fact located on la Boeuf creek as now known.] The road leading to it from Erie, cut out by the French, is still called the French road, and Mr. John Miller Jr. of Erie, to whom I am indebted for valuable information, informs me that it is one of the finest roads in the county. Mr. Coffen in his affidavit says that this fort was triangular in form, but the Pennsylvania Colonial record has it that "four houses composed the sides, the bastions were of poles driven into the ground, standing more than twelve feet above and sharpened at the top, with port holes cut for cannon and

loop holes for small arms. Eight cannon, six pounders, were mounted in each bastion, and one four pounder before the gate. In the bastions were guard houses, chapel, surgeons' lodgings and commandant's private stores." But it matters little as to the particular form of the fort.

Fifty years ago the present season I visited this fort.—The corners of the structure were pointed out to me, and the remains of a fireplace of one of the log houses within the inclosure. But I am of the opinion that these remains, and such as I am informed exist there to-day, are not the remains of the old French fort. It is well known that this fort was burned and absolutely destroyed by the Indians within a short time of, and probably previous to, the surrender of Fort la Briske Isle to the Indians, or in May, 1759.

W. G. Sargeant, Esq., of Mercer county, Pa., writes me that his great-grandfather, Andrew Ellicott, in connection with Dr. T. R. Kennedy, who afterward built mills at Kennedy in this county, built a block house on the site of the old French fort, or Fort la Boeuf, in 1794 or '95, which, I understand, was for the protection of their own men while engaged in a lumbering enterprise. The remains found there to-day are probably, as Mr. Sargeant seems to suggest, those of this block house built by his ancestor. There are very many facts connected with this old French fort and the French occupancy, in my own possession, that are extremely interesting, and I am promised many others by way of Mr. Sargeant, also with reference to the block house named, that may form subjects for some future paper. In this instance, as in many instances noted in our American antiquities, I believe we have been groping too far in the past, when, on careful inquiry,

we might find our originals much nearer our own time.

It is said that the diary of a Catholic priest, who accompanied the expedition under M. Marin and was located and officiated at Fort la Boeuf in 1753 and 1754, is still in existence. If so, it doubtless contains information of interest and value. Since writing the above sentence I have been fortunate in obtaining an English copy of this diary, from the original which is now in the archives of the Dominion government, Canada, but with a single exception, named farther on, will reserve it as a text for further work at some time in the future.

The importance attached by the English to the building of these forts, la Briske Isle and la Boeuf, may be seen in the facts connected with the visit of Maj. Washington to the commandant, M. de Pierre, in December, 1753. Washington expected to find the commandant at Fort le Briske Isle (Erie), but he had been called to Fort le Boeuf (Waterford) to give directions with reference to the strengthening of the fort and the building of boats for the contemplated movement in the spring. Washington was greatly surprised at the extensive preparations made and making, and the number of transports along the creek—fifty bark canoes, and 170 pine boats ready for use. The history of that visit, as I have said, is well known, and its significance in this connection is seen only in the fact that in the main it corroborates the statements made by Mr. Coffen and the two other deserters referred to, and goes to further establish the truth of the whole relation. As further evidence of the reliability of the statements made by Stephen Coffen, I desire to introduce the following:

The past winter there died in Painesville, Ohio, Mr. Isaac Shattuck, aged 81 years. Mr. Shattuck

was for many years a citizen of Portland in this county, and a man of most perfect integrity. He was a neighbor of mine, and I often listened with a large degree of pleasure to the recital of facts and incidents by him, of early life as communicated to him by his grandfather. Samuel Shattuck, who came to Portland with the family in 1823, and died in 1827. It is important that I state some facts in regard to this man, Samuel Shattuck, as I had them from the grandson and the family, in order to a more perfect understanding of what is to follow.

Samuel Shattuck was born in the town of Deerfield, Franklin Co., Mass., Sept. 18, 1741. He was of English origin, his ancestors coming to Massachusetts Bay sometime in the early days of the colony. He came of a hardy and adventurous stock, and was never at ease, even when a small boy, when stirring events were transpiring around him. He was a youth of perfect integrity, unusual good sense and the soul of honor. He grew up amid all the exciting scenes that cluster around the life of a pioneer and a soldier. He remained at his home with his father and his family until his twelfth year. The exciting events of the running strife that existed between the colonies and Canada before the formal declaration of war, commonly called the French and Indian war, fired his youthful spirit, and no amount of restraint could keep him at home with the family. He was not at all certain what he could do, but was certain that there would be an opening somewhere that would admit him to a participation in the strife that was brewing and sure to come, in fact had already come. Sometime in 1752 he left his home in Deerfield in company with some colonial officers, ostensibly for some point north of Albany, New York, but we next hear of him at Oswego on Lake On-

tario, quartered at the old fort on the west side of the river, built in 1727.

The position he occupied is not known, but it is presumed that he was attached in some way to the officers' quarters. From here commenced with him a series of adventures and duties performed as a soldier, that did not in fact cease until the last farewell was said at the disbanding of the colonial armies in 1783. I have thus introduced a slight biographical sketch of the youthful Shattuck for the purpose of placing him in evidence with reference to certain features of the history of the old Portage Road. The young man remained at Oswego discharging such duties as were assigned him until the next spring, or spring of 1753. His recital of some of the scenes and events of that year and a part of the next, I will repeat in substance, using my own words. He says :

It was well known by Lieut. Holland, the commandant at the Fort, and all the garrison, that an expedition had been fitting out through the fall and early winter of 1753-54, at Quebec and Montreal, and it was well known also that its destination was the western frontier, in fact some scouts had come in and reported that a large number of boats were in process of construction and nearly completed at Niagara for some service, presumably on Lake Erie. In all this we were not disappointed, for in some of the last days of March we were informed that an army of from 800 to 1,000 men, French and Indians, had arrived at Niagara from Quebec. A day or two later an Indian, a trusted guide and scout, came in and reported that preparations were being rapidly made for a movement up Lake Erie to some point he could not learn, and by the 10th or 15th of April the expedition would embark in boats that had been prepared during the winter. News also came to the fort by way of Albany that the

French in this move had thrown off all disguise, and openly avowed their determination to reach the Ohio Valley by way of the Allegheny river and eventually their possessions below. They claimed to be masters of the situation and cared little what the English might do at that late day. The orders just received by Lient. Holland were to watch the movements of the French, and report as soon as their destination was known. Looking over all the facts in his possession he was of the opinion that the expedition by the lake would be a short one, and at once detailed an officer and five men to follow and watch them. On my urgent solicitation I was allowed to accompany them. We set out on the 7th of April for Lake Erie, following the shore of Lake Ontario until we reached what is now known as the Genesee river, then struck boldly into the woods, intending to reach Lake Erie 40 or 50 miles from its outlet; but as it happened we came in sight of its waters a few miles below what is now called Catarangus creek. We were satisfied the flotilla had not passed, so we waited for it. The second day after, as near as I can remember the 16th of April, it came in sight, and the sight was beautiful indeed. It was a fine day and well along into the afternoon. We at once started onward, keeping well back from the lake, and encamped for the night on the banks of a stream that I now believe to have been the Canadaway, a few miles west of the now location of Dunkirk. In the morning the boats were out of sight, but we expected to overtake them easily, and in fact did so sooner than was agreeable to us as we came near discovering ourselves to the Indians that belonged to the expedition scattered through the woods. They had landed at the mouth of Chautauqua creek, as now called, and were already felling trees on the west side of the Creek, apparently for some sort of fortification.

We were confident they had chosen this as a carrying place to some waterway south of the highlands. That night we slept some two or three miles back from the lake, probably near the east end of the village of Westfield as now seen (1826). In the morning we repaired to our place of ambush and were much surprised, in the afternoon, to see another flotilla of boats, filled with Frenchmen, make a landing, a much larger number of men than the party of the day before. From some cause not apparent to us there was a cessation of work, and after three or four days the whole of both parties, with the exception of a few Indians, embarked in their boats and moved westward. Here was something unlooked for, but as we had been detailed for a special duty we had no alternative but to follow. We at once struck back into the woods and to the highlands, where we could look over the lake and at the same time avoid some straggling Indians that seemed to choose the land rather than the company of their friends on the water. These redskins, all the season through, gave us more trouble than all things else, and we were sometimes obliged to absent ourselves for days to avoid the unusual number that occasionally appeared to gather about, watching the work of the French. The wonder is that we escaped discovery and capture, but we owed all our good fortune in this to our leader, who was an old Indian fighter from Onondaga, and understood them well. After a few miles we were obliged to return to the rise of ground between the highlands and the lake, and at sundown were nearly abreast of the boats when they made a landing at the point where the city of Erie now stands. For the next two months or more there was considerable work done toward building a fort, but it must have been the last of July or possibly later before it was completed. [Marin, in

his report to Gov. Duquesne, says it was the third of August, and some other accounts say it was the seventh of August, but the facts are it was completed on the third and occupied the seventh.]

In the meantime parties had been sent south and returned, and on more than one occasion there seemed to be a delay in movements that to us seemed unaccountable, but in due time the whole force, aside from the garrison, moved south, completing a fine road as they went, that other parties had commenced. After three days they halted on the banks of a stream running nearly east at that point, where they went to work completing a stockaded fort already begun. We were not idle all this time, but wandered away sometimes for days at a time, where small game was more plenty, upon which we depended for our subsistence. We did not use our fire arms from the time we left Oswego until we were well on our return, but depended upon traps and snares to secure such game as we needed. The design of the French was plain to be seen, and thinking we had accomplished all we were expected to do, we left for Oswego some time in September, where we arrived in due time with a full report which was sent at once to New York. I forgot to say that one of our party was dispatched to Oswego as early as the first of July. It was not expected that the French with so small a force and so late in the season, and with the amount of work before them, would push forward to the Ohio valley that season, and their return was confidently looked for and with great anxiety. Sometime in the latter part of October it was known that the expedition had not returned, and fearing mischief, Lieut. Holland dispatched the same party to learn of their movements and report as soon as at all consistent.

This time we took a course farther south and after reaching the highlands

south of Lake Erie continued along their crest, keeping the lake in sight. On the seventh day out, or October 30th, as near as I remember, in the afternoon we came upon a party of nearly or quite a hundred Frenchmen rolling logs into a ravine in the bottom of a deep gulf, and digging into the steep sides of the gulf for a road, apparently, at a point that I now (1826) know to have been on the south border of the village of Westfield. They had, apparently, returned from Erie and were completing the work they began in April. We came upon this party very suddenly and unexpectedly, for we had supposed that the whole matter of a carrying place had been transferred to Erie; in fact so sudden was it that had it not been for some adroit movements on our part and sharp running up the east branch of Chautauqua creek, as I now know it, we should have been seen, overtaken and of course gone into captivity. As it was we escaped and witnessed the completion of the road from Lake Erie to Lake Chautauqua. On the third or fourth day the whole party embarked in their boats and moved eastward. We at once retraced our steps and about the 10th of November reached Oswego."

This is the story of Mr. Shattuck, and knowing the family as I did, I have not the least doubt of its truthfulness. Although traditional it goes far, very far, toward establishing the truth of the statement by Mr. Coffen as to the origin of the old Portage Road and the date of its opening. I desire to introduce another relation going to show the early existence of the road, its builders and its probable use. It is from a letter of Gen. William Irvine to Gen. Washington, written Jan. 27, 1788, and found in Crig's History of Pittsburg, published in 1851. Gen. Irvine had himself visited Chautauqua lake after the close of the revolutionary war, and in answer

to a letter of inquiry by Gen. Washington of Jan. 10, the same year, he gives many particulars of his visit and seems to be particularly pleased with the waterway from Fort Pitt to Lake Jadaque or Chautauqua. After reaching the head of Lake Jadaque he was taken sick and was not able to complete his tour of inspection to Lake Erie as intended, but returned to Pittsburg. Previous to this he had examined other routes through Ohio, and the French Creek route, as to the best communication by water with Lake Erie, and continuing his letter he says: "I think I shall be able to afford you more satisfaction as I can point out a more practicable and easy communication, by which the articles of trade you mention can be transported from Lake Erie than by any other hitherto mentioned route, at least until canals are cut. This is by a branch of the Alleghany which is navigable by boats of considerable burthen to within eight miles of Lake Erie.

"I examined the greater part of the communication myself, and such part as I did not, was done by persons before and subsequent to my being there, whose accounts can scarcely be doubted." Gen. Irvine made the distance from Fort Pitt to Venango by water, and from Venango to the mouth of the Conewango, where the town of Warren, Pa., is located, on horseback, and from this point to Lake Jadaque (Chautauqua) by boat. "I traveled about twenty five miles a day. Two Indians pushed a loaded canoe, and encamped with me every night."

Of the distance between Lake Erie and Lake Chautauqua, that he failed to visit on account of sickness, he says: "The following account I had from a chief of the Seneca tribe as well as from a white man named Mathews, a Virginian, who says that he was taken prisoner by the Indians at Kenawha in 1777. He

has lived with the Indians since that time. As far as I could judge he appeared to be well acquainted with this part of the country. I employed him as an interpreter. He stated that from the appearance of Jadaque Lake it is not more than nine miles along the path or road to Lake Erie, and that there was formerly a wagon road between the two lakes. The Indian related that he was about fourteen years old when the French went first to establish a Post at Fort Pitt, that he accompanied an uncle who was a chief warrior, on that occasion, who attended the French; that the head of Lake Jadaque was the spot where the detachment embarked; that they fell down to Fort Duquesne without any obstruction, in large canoes with all the artillery, stores, provisions, &c. He added that French Creek was made the medium of communication afterward, why, he could not tell, but always wondered at it, as he expressed himself, knowing the other to be so much better. The Seneca related many things to corroborate and convince me of its truth." * * * *

"Both Mathews and the Seneca desired to conduct me, as a further proof of their veracity, to the spot on Lake Jadaque, where lies one of the four-pounders left by the French.—Major Finley, who has been in the country since I was, informed me that he had seen the gun." The French Creek route was evidently not well thought of by Gen. Irvine and not worthy of consideration as a means of communication. Gen. Irvine, in a letter to Gen. Washington dated Oct. 6, 1788, says very decidedly that "the navigation of the Conewango, *I know*, is much preferable to French Creek."

The real reasons for the adoption of the French Creek route to the Alleghany by the French, as it appears to me, I will give farther on.

These statements by Gen. Irvine

together with those of the Virginian and Seneca Indian go very decidedly to show that there was some other reason for the change of route from water to water than the one of eligibility. For fifty years after I became acquainted with these two routes and knew them, every rod, it was also a wonder to me that the one by way of Chautauqua lake should have been abandoned for the one by the way of French Creek. But a letter from Gov. Duquesne to M. Rouille the French minister of Foreign Affairs dated Aug. 20, 1753, explains in part the matter and gives some reasons for the change, yet it seems to me the grand underlying thought is not brought to the surface. This letter in very many particulars is corroborative of the statements of Mr. Coffen, and a number of very natural inferences go to establish other statements, so that we need hardly to insist on placing it—the affidavit—in the line of tradition, but in every essential as facts of history. The Gov. says:

“You will see, my lord, by the extract of this journal hereto annexed, the reasons which compelled me to reduce to almost one half the rear guard that I had informed you consisted of four hundred men, and those that determined me to prefer landing the troops at the harbor of Presque Isle on Lake Erie, which, very fortunately, I discovered, instead of Chatacouit (Chautauqua), where I informed you I would begin my posts. This discovery is the more propitious as it is a harbor which the largest barks can enter loaded and be in perfect safety. I am informed that the beach, the soil and the resources of all sorts were the same as represented to me. * * * It is regarded as the finest spot in nature. * * * A bark could safely winter at Presque Isle, where it would lie as it were in a box.”

Farther on he eulogises the harbor,

but complains of the long portage. These changes were brought about mainly through the dispatches of M. Marin to Gov. Duquesne, giving glowing descriptions of the harbor and the surrounding country. Marin in this adhered very strictly to the terms of his contract with M. Barber at Chatacouit. Be this as it may, we all know that as far as harbor facilities are concerned simply, this route was vastly to be preferred to the one by Chatacouit, and I am of the opinion that these facts, as regards the harbor, influenced the Governor beyond all things else. Gov. Duquesne was not a little ambitious. It opened up to him at once a vast possibility. In his mind a young navy and a vast commerce sprang into existence at once, on these inland seas, and became as a whole one glorious addenda to the French crown, as he intimates to M. Renville, the minister of foreign affairs, farther on.

With Gov. Duquesne action followed quickly every decision, and no sooner had he learned of the fine harbor at Presque Isle than he dispatched a Royal assistant Pilot to search around the Niagara rapids for some place where a bark could remain to take in its load,” and expressed the hope that soon he will be able to report to his government that he had ordered the construction of such a vessel, and then says that “nothing would be of greater advantage in the saving of transport and the security of property of the new posts.” Although this was an afterthought he proposed to make these new discoveries and these changes factors in this scheme of possession and colonization in the interior of the continent. The better route to the Alleghany must be abandoned for one less feasible in view of the grand possibilities surrounding the latter. This afterthought of Gov. Duquesne, from whatever cause, was

seized upon as a glorious inspiration. The Governor was not a pessimist. No amount of adversity or unfavorable criticism, as far as this enterprise was concerned, seemed to dampen his ardor or dim the glowing picture upon which he was just now gazing; yet he seems to have had times of perplexity and regrets, and some doubts whether he did well in entering upon such an important enterprise under so unfavorable circumstances, and says that were he placed in like circumstances again he would better weigh his chances of success—he would not take the same risks.

The landing of the French troops at the mouth of the Chadakoin creek (Barcelona) was not a matter of chance. The French were adepts in wood craft, and had critically explored the entire route and had made maps of locations and every point of interest. They well knew what they were doing. In 1749, the Marquis de la Galissoniere was Governor of Canada. He was a humpback, yet his deformed body was animated by a "bold spirit and a strong and penetrating intellect." He was by far the most able of any of the naval governors of Canada. He saw at once the necessity of an immediate movement toward the accomplishment of their cherished design of a line of forts from Canada to the Ohio valley and eventually to their possessions below, and to inaugurate the scheme he dispatched an expedition to explore a route from Lake Erie to the Alleghany river, down that stream and take formal possession of the country in the name of the king of France. The command of this expedition was given to Celoron de Bienville, who was "a Chevalier de St. Louis and a captain in the colony troops." The expedition consisted of fourteen officers and cadets, twenty soldiers, one hundred and eighty Canadians, and a band of Indians. The flotilla in

which they embarked consisted of twenty-three birch bark canoes. They left LaChine, the northern point of the island of Montreal, on the 15th of June, 1749, and reached Niagara on the 6th of July. They carried their canoes and supplies over the portage by the falls and embarked on the waters of Lake Erie. On the 15th of July they landed "on the lonely shore where the town of Portland (Barcelona) now stands, and for the next seven days were busy in shouldering canoes and baggage up and down the steep hills, through the dense forest of beech, oak, ash and elm, to the waters of Chautauqua Lake, eight or nine miles distant. Here they embarked again, steering southward over the sunny waters, in the stillness and solitude of the leafy hills, till they came to the outlet, and glided down the peaceful current in the shade of the tall forests that overarched it." —[Parkman]. They reached La Belle Riviere at noon of the 29th. This part of the Ohio which they had reached is now called the Alleghany, and the point was at the mouth of the Conewango, where the town of Warren, Pa., now stands. Here a very imposing ceremony took place. The men were drawn up in order, Louis XV was proclaimed lord of all that region, the arms of France, stamped on a sheet of tin were nailed to a tree, a plate of lead was buried at its foot, and the Notary of the expedition drew up a formal act of the whole proceeding. The leaden plate was inscribed as follows:

"Year 1749, in the reign of Louis XV., King of France, we, Celoron, commanding the detachment sent by the Marquis de la Galissoniere, Commander General of New France, to restore tranquility in certain villages of these cantons, have buried this plate at the confluence of the Ohio and the Kanaoua-

gon (Conewango) this 29th of July, as a token of renewal of possess on heretofore taken of the aforesaid River Ohio, of all streams that fall into it, and all lands on both sides to the source of the aforesaid streams, as the preceding kings of France have enjoyed or ought to have enjoyed it, and which they have upheld by force of arms and by treaties, notably by those of Ryswick, Utrecht, and Aix la Chapelle."

From this point they descended the Alleghany to a point twelve miles below the mouth of French Creek, where they buried another leaden plate like the first; another was buried near the mouth of Wheeling Creek in Ohio, and another at the mouth of the Muskingham, when the same ceremony was had as at the mouth of the Conewango. Here, about half a century later, a party of boys bathing in the stream saw the plate protruding from the bank, laid bare by the high waters of the river, secured it with a long stick, used half of it for bullets and gave the balance to a man from Marietta, who, hearing of this mysterious relic inscribed in some unknown tongue, came for the purpose of securing it from their hands. [O. H. Marshall in Mag. of Am. Hist., Mar., 1878.] It is now in the cabinet of the Am. Antiquarian Society. [Parkman.] Pursuing their course, on the 18th of August, Celoron buried yet another plate at the mouth of the Great Kenawha. In 1846, nearly a century afterward, this too was brought to light by the action of the waters of the river and was found by a boy while at play near the water. The inscription was nearly identical with those buried before except as to name and date. The last plate was buried on the 30th of August at the mouth of the Great Miami. This river was called by the French Riviere a la Roche. From this point Celoron and his party started north-

ward up the Miami to the mouth of what is now called Loramie Creek, where was situated an Indian village called Pique Town, or Pickawillany by the English. This town afterward became one of the most important Indian towns in the west. His worn out canoes were here burned, and the whole party made its way with great difficulty over the long portage to a French post on the Maumee river, where they were furnished wooden canoes in which they embarked and reached Lake Erie early in October. A month later they were at Fort Frontenac and soon after reached Montreal. Thus, it will be seen that in 1749 the old portage road through our county was in fact located.

Some other writers make mention of this old road, and among them Pouchet, a French officer who commanded the French at Fort Niagara in July, 1759, when it was taken by the English under Sir William Johnson. Pouchet wrote a history of the French and Indian war in North America, and in speaking of the route from Lake Erie, south, says: "The river Chatacoin (Chautauqua) is the first that communicates from Lake Erie to the Ohio, and it was by this that they, the French, went in early times when they made a journey to that part."

Sir William Johnson was sent by General Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of all the British troops in America in 1761, to Detroit to establish treaties and trading posts with the Western Indians, and on his return passed down the south shore of Lake Erie, and in his journal relates very many interesting particulars of his journey, some of which I will copy:

"Wednesday, October 1, 1761, in the morning, we embarked at Presque Isle (Erie) where we had staid all night, with a strong head wind, continued so all the day, notwithstanding

ing it improved all day, and got to Jadaghqua creek (Chautauqua) and carrying place, which is a fine harbor and encampment. It is very dangerous from Presque Isle here, being a prodigious steep rocky bank all the way, except two or three creeks and small beaches where are beautiful streams of water or springs which tumble down the rocks. We came about forty miles today. The fire was burning where Capt. Cochran (the officer who commanded at Presque Isle) I suppose encamped last night. Here the French had a baking place, and here they had meetings, and assembled the Indians when first going to Ohio, and bought this place of them."

The baking place referred to by Sir William, was a circular piece of masonry of stone laid in strong mortar, three feet in height and three or four feet in diameter, and was built on the west side of the creek at Barcelona, where the first attempt to build a fort was made by the French. Another oven of the same character was discovered near the boatlanding at Mayville, and was in a good state of preservation as late as 1810. Judge Peacock often spoke of it when referring to the times of the French occupation. The one in Barcelona was known to exist much earlier, in 1802, the year of the first settlement of the county. This also was often referred to by some of the early settlers, I am informed, especially by Col. Beil, who saw it at the date named. French deserters and others escaping from the French prisoners, speak of the carrying place at Chadakoin, and there is reason to believe that it was at various times used by the French and their Indian allies in various expeditions of a warlike character, other than the one in the spring of 1754, from its opening to the final evacuation of the country by them in 1759. Investigations develop continuous

facts in regard to this old road, but I have not time to pursue the question further now.

Looking over the whole ground and keeping our text, the Old Portage Road, in view, I come to this conclusion: The portage, by way of Presque Isle, required a vast amount of labor to make it what it must be in order to a successful means of transit for their armies, stores, and supplies; and on the retirement of the army the last of October was far from being completed, and in no sense was it in condition to admit of use for these purposes, and besides this the streams upon which they had relied for the passing of heavy stores and ordnance had so far shrunk as to be of no use whatever. Another season would be necessary to complete the work by this route they had begun. Serious disappointment, sickness and death clustered thick about them, especially at Le Boeuf, and it was decided that as the route by Chadakoin needed but a small amount of work, comparatively, to make it passable, it should be completed for the first expedition, the one to be undertaken in the spring, the spring of 1754, and afterward abandoned as the chief route. This was decidedly humiliating, but there seemed to be no alternative. There is no direct statement to this effect, but in reading the dispatches and the old colonial records of those times, one is forced to these conclusions; at all events, this arrangement seems to have been carried out. M. Pean with two hundred men completing the work at Chadakoin as we have seen, the balance of the army, with the exception of the garrisons, returning to Canada. The portage at Chadakoin was in the end to be but temporary. A vast internal empire, with all its etceteras, was to be built up, and the advantages to be gained from a fine harbor more than counterbalanced the disadvantages

with reference to route. That this plan was carried out, the story of the Seneca Indian that I have in part given, seems to more than indicate. There is no doubt that the army of 1,000 French and Indians under Monsieur Contrecoeur, that drove out the little garrison of but forty men of the Ohio company at the confluence of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers and established Fort Duquesne, Apr. 16, 1754, actually reached its destination over the old Portage road in this county, floated over the waters of our own Chautauqua lake, down its outlet to the Alleghany, and from that point followed that stream to their destination.

From out-croppings in the letters and dispatches here and there as found among colonial papers, we learn that to secure a change of carrying place from Chadakoin to Presque Isle, Sieur Marin had among other things promised that the entire route should be opened and properly equipped during the season, and that everything should be in readiness for an early advance; in fact, the sanguine governor, Duquesne, from the glowing letters of Marin and others, expected no less than this, in fact more, a descent of the Alleghany the same fall of 1753 and winter the party at a point he only reached late the next spring or in April, and it is quite probable this might have occurred had he adhered to his first intention and made Chadokoin his point instead of Presque Isle. To be sure Fort LaBriske Isle had been built and was a perfect thing in its way; Fort Le Boeuf had also been built and was sufficient for the purpose for which it was designed; Venango was not completed, was in reality but a post. A very fine road had been built between Forts LaBriske Isle and Le Boeuf, but the road below was hardly commenced, and the streams that fall were a failure, and the outlook was anything

but encouraging. The work by the men thus far had been done at a fearful cost and vast quantities of property had been destroyed or lost. Marin had practiced deception, and had deceived himself also in the hope of carrying out a grand scheme.

In his efforts to forward the work at Venango, being short of transportation facilities, his horses poor and unfit for duty, he entrusted a large amount of goods and supplies to an Indian chief and his party to convey thither, paying him a stipulated price in gold and trinkets, but as might have been expected, the wily chief hardly got beyond the picket line before he turned his course for Ohio and was never seen afterward. This occurred almost immediately after Marin had written Gov. Duquesne that the natives were very docile and ready and willing to do anything he asked of them. Sickness of some fatal character broke out among his men and it was said by deserters that some two hundred died and were buried in the forest. Of the truth of this as to numbers, there seems to be some doubt, though it is well known that the men suffered severely from lung diseases, dysentery and scurvy, and an unusual number were left to sleep their last sleep amid these western wilds. It was an expedition full of privation and extreme suffering, and those that escaped death and returned to Canada were haggard and emaciated in the extreme, in fact were little less than skeletons. Gov. Duquesne was greatly shocked at their appearance and said of them as they passed him in review at Quebec: "I could not help being touched by the pitiable state to which fatigue and exposure had reduced them. Past all doubt, if these emaciated figures had gone down the Ohio as intended, the river would have been strewn with corpses, and the evil disposed savages would not have failed to attack

the survivors, seeing that they were but specters." [Duquesne's letter in N. Y. colonial documents 10, 255. Also Duquesne on Ministre, Nov. 29, 1753.] Marin, the commander, a gruff, choleric man of sixty-three years of age, himself fell sick with dysentery early in the season but refused to be sent back to Montreal. He bore his infliction however with little tortitude, and became sour, morose and peevish. The work hung heavily on his hands, dragged its slow length along, and the effect of it all upon his proud spirit, more especially his failure to accomplish what he had confidently promised, broke down his physical powers and he wished to die, and that the work at Le Boeuf perish with him. He lingered along under the most distressing circumstances until the 29th of October, but a single day after the army left for Canada, when he died. In an English copy of the journal of the catholic priest, officiating at Le Boeuf and Fort Duquesne for the years 1753 and 1754, which has recently come into my possession, I find the following:

"BURIAL OF MARIN, COMMANDER IN CHIEF
OF THE ARMY AT LA BELLE RIVIERE."

"In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty three, on the twenty-ninth of October, died at about half-past four in the evening in the fort of LaReviere aux Boeuf, under the name of St. Pierre, Monsieur Pier epoint, Esq., Sieur deMarin, Chevalier of the Military and Royal Order of St. Louis, Captain of Infantry and Commander in Chief of the army at LaBelle Riviere, after having received the sacraments of Penance, Extreme Unction and Viaticum, aged sixty three years. His body was buried in the cemetery of said Fort, and that by us Recollet Priest, Chaplain at the said Fort, and during the campaign of LaBelle Riviere. There were present at his funeral, Messieurs de Repentigny, commandant of the aforesaid

army and Captain of Infantry, and M. M. Du Huys, Lieutenant of Infantry, Benoit, Lieutenant of Infantry, De Simblin, Major at the aforesaid Fort, Lafors, keeper of the stores, who have signed with us.

LE GARDEUR DE REPENTIGNY.

LAFORCE BENOIS DE HUYS,
T. DE PRE SIMBLIN.

FR DENYS, BARON PTRE RECOLLET.
Chaplain.

Sieur Marin was a remarkable man. He was chosen to command this expedition on account of his great ability and peculiar tact in dealing with the Indian tribes, as we learn from a letter of Governor Duquesne to his home government, before the expedition left Canada. [Paris Doc. X. Aug. 20, 1753.] But he was rash and unprincipled, with an overweening ambition to serve well his King and country and build up an empire in the heart of the North American continent and do it in his own way. By his dogged persistence he possibly and probably defeated what might have been a grand success; for who can tell what would have been the result if the expedition had reached its destination the same season, as it might and probably would have done had not the route been changed. But whatever he was or was not he is deserving of great credit for his perseverance under such untoward and discouraging circumstances. Thus ended the first expedition to establish a line of French forts between Canada and the Valley of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico; and really the master spirit of the enterprise gave his life for its success and sealed his work by leaving his earthly remains in the soil on which the most Herculean efforts of his life had been made.

I have thus briefly adverted to a few facts and incidents connected with the early occupancy of the

western and southern section of our county, and their study has been of growing interest to me; yet a thousand things remain to be said, but must be passed over for the present. Although much of the evidence with reference to the four propositions named in the outset is in a sense traditional in character, yet it seems to me that it is of such a character that the most skeptical can hardly fail of acknowledging its truth. That the deep solitudes of our county were the scenes of warlike demonstrations nearly half a century before the first settlement by the whites (1802) now admits of no doubt, and that the old Portage Road from its associations has claims on us as a relic of the past, none will deny; and I believe our discussion has demonstrated with reference to the four propositions stated in the outset: 1st, that the old Portage Road was constructed by an army of Frenchmen coming from Quebec, Canada, by way of Niagara. 2d, that it was constructed in 1753. 3d, that it was constructed for the transportation of military stores and munitions of war. 4th, that it was actually used for the purposes intended within a few months after its construction and by those by whom it was constructed.

It would have been interesting and perhaps more profitable had I, before writing this paper, presented more or less minutely a history of the adventures of some of the early French travelers to this section, such as Baron la Hontan, who was an officer in the expedition of Gov. Denonville to Lake Ontario and Niagara in 1687. After leaving Niagara la Hontan coasted along the northern shore of Lake Erie as far as the French Post of St. Joseph. With some western Indians he afterward passed to the south shore, but I do not find, as I once supposed, that he came within the limits of Chautauqua County, but having visited the

counties both east and west of this county, he became so well informed with reference to the country, productions, etc., that he gave a very fine description of both, the next year, 1688. He was very enthusiastic in regard to the section near the lower end of the lake and refers with a good deal of animation to the wild beeves (buffalos) found in "prodigious quantities" roaming in the forest.

And that other French traveler, Charlevoix, who visited our county in 1720, who gave a glowing description of the scenery along our northern border, and the bright green hills in the background. But these and a thousand facts and incidents that I might have named must be left for the present for want of time and space. I may return to them at some time in the future.

As I am an advocate today for Chautauqua county and its claims to such honors as may come from military occupancy or military movements within her borders, I wish to refer to another thing that relates to ancient warlike demonstrations. Judge Foote refers to it in his letter of Feb., 1871, and Mr. Edson in his addenda to that letter also refers to it. I have reference to the statement that a British expedition during the revolutionary war, or in 1782, was fitted out at some point, and destined to operate against Fort Pitt, then in the possession of the colonial forces, and for two months or more rendezvoused on Chautauqua lake preparatory to a descent on that point. I remember very well of reading at the time the lecture of Hon. Samuel A. Brown, of Jamestown, before the students of Jamestown Academy, I think in 1843, in which he stated that an army of 300 British and 500 Indians, with twelve pieces of artillery, spent two months, June and July, around Chautauqua lake preparatory to floating down the outlet and the Alle-

ghany to attack Fort Pitt. I am not apprised in regard to his authority for the statement, but presume it was the same letter of Gen. Irvine to Gen. Washington, from which I have already quoted. This story has been discredited by some, and Judge Foote did not give it full credence, yet it might have been true and probably was true. It would seem that sixty-one years, or to 1843, ought not to have obliterated every vestige of so important a movement as this one. In older countries it is probable some record would have been preserved, but with us in the new world, as we call it, the word is onward, with but too little reference to the past or its lessons. I will quote again from the letter of Gen. Irvine:

"He," the Seneca Indian giving information to General Irvine, whose name was Kiosola, "was constantly employed by the British during the late war and held the rank of captain, and commanded the party which was defeated on the Alleghany by Col. Broadhead; that a detachment composed of 300 British and 500 Indians was formed and actually embarked in canoes on Lake Jadague, with twelve pieces of artillery with an avowed intention of attacking Fort Pitt. This expedition was laid aside in consequence of the reported repairs and strength of Fort Pitt, carried by a spy from the neighborhood of the Fort. They then contented themselves with the usual mode of warfare, by sending small parties, on the frontier, one of which burned Hannastown. * * * I remember very well that in August 1781, we picked up at Fort Pitt a number of canoes which had drifted down the river, and I received repeated accounts in June and July from a Canadian who deserted to me, as well as from some friendly Indians, of this armament, but I never knew before then where they had assembled."

This is all that has come to us from any source of a historic nature touching this matter. I have heretofore introduced tradition to aid me in my endeavor to learn *facts*, and I shall hope to be pardoned if I again introduce myself as a medium through which other like evidence may be introduced that may be of interest and may cast a gleam of light on an otherwise obscure page of history. Fifty-one years ago the present fall (1890), or fall of 1839, I was in the city of Pittsburg on business and on my return to my home in Meadville, Pa., I proposed to find my way over the river road on foot.

The second day I fell in company with an Alleghany river pilot from some point above Franklin. His name has entirely escaped me. He was a man of fine physique, and in some sense one of the most remarkable men I ever met, at least as far as general information was concerned. No subject could be broached but an unusually intelligent discussion on his part followed as a matter of course. During our long walk I learned much of his history and that of his family. He was then, he said, forty-nine years of age. His father was born in what is now Chester county, Pa., and was a soldier of the Revolution. He was with Col. Daniel Broadhead in 1779 on his expedition against the Seneca and Munsey Indians in August and September of that year, but was seriously wounded at some point on the upper Alleghany, by an accidental discharge of his gun, and left to die, but for some cause he never learned he was carried a long distance away by some Indians, secreted and nursed to health and protected for some months, or until strength returned, when he was allowed to depart, and in due time found his way to his old home. He very soon enlisted again and was most of the time on the frontier in some capacity, was captured by the Indians in the spring

of 1782, and was as a prisoner, with a party of 300 English and some four or five hundred Indians on Chautauqua lake in the summer of that year. He said they were preparing to drop down the Alleghany to Fort Pitt; that the expedition started at the appointed time, but for some cause not apparent to him stopped short of its destination. From this camp they sent out three parties in as many different directions within a very short time, one of which pillaged and burned Hannastown (a small village in what is now Northumberland county, Pa.) His father escaped from the main camp after the return of the party from Hannastown and found his way to Fort Pitt, and eventually to his

home. He did not again enlist.

This is given for what it is worth, but I am convinced of its truth. It is almost identical with the story of the Seneca Indian and goes far to corroborate it and some facts in history. In looking over the whole matter in the light of such evidence as I have been able to obtain, I have no doubt but this expedition was actually undertaken, the British coming from Canada by way of Fort Niagara and Lake Erie to the now location of the village of Barcelona, the same route pursued by the French in 1753, over the old Portage Road and Lake Chautauqua, down the outlet and the Alleghany river as stated.

H. C. TAYLOR.

THE END.

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